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RELATIVE DEPRIVATION, IDENTITY, ANTI-WHITE ATTITUDES, AND POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AMONG BLACK AFRICANS IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION.

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AFRICANA

RELATIVE DEPRIVATION, IDENTITY, ANTI-WHITE ATTITUDES, AND POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AMONG BLACK AFRICANS IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

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Unlike other disciplines of the human sciences, psychology has traditionally ignored the problems of underdevelopment in the third world (Bulhan, 1985). The unfolding socio-political process in South Africa therefore presents a unique opportunity for the study of the reciprocal influences of individual psychology and social structure. American political scientists, sociologists, and social psychologists suggest that various collective phenomena referred to as social movements (see Abeles, 1976; Isaac, Mutran, & Stryker, 1980; Laurer, 1976; Morrison, 1973), collective violence (see Berkowitz, 1972; Crawford & Naditch, 1970; Crosby, 1976; Gurr, 1970), or even revolutions (see Davies, 1962; Morales, 1973; Salert, 1976) can be explained in major aspects by reference to the concept of relative deprivation. Relative deprivation theory elaborates the moral outrage explanation for collective behaviour which asserts that rebellious forms of collective behaviour will not occur unless the disadvantaged come to feel morally outraged about their unjust treatment. One comment in the literature dismisses research on outrage and perceived injustice as "obvious and trite, for surely only angry men turn to revolution" (Kramnick, 1972, p.56, cited in Martin, Brickman & Murray, 1984).

The concept of relative deprivation was introduced by Stouffer et al. (1949) in their study of the American soldier to explain a variety of occasions where sense of deprivation was not related to objective conditions. Stouffer et al. made the important observation that feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's outcomes depend more on subjective standards, such as level of outcomes obtained by salient comparison persons, than on objective prosperity. However, the authors presented neither a definition nor a systematic theory of relative deprivation. The first formal theory of relative deprivation was proposed by Davis (1959), who suggested that comparisons with in-group versus out-group members lead to different kinds of emotional reactions. Essentially, Davis proposed that comparisons with in-group members can produce feelings of relative deprivation or relative gratification, whereas comparison with out-group members can produce feelings of relative subordination or relative superiority.

Runciman (1966) introduced a distinction between egoistical versus fraternal deprivation, both of which are presumably "relative" in the sense described above. Egoistical deprivation refers to the perception that one's outcomes fall below a subjective standard (usually based on other individual's outcomes), whereas fraternal deprivation refers to the perception that one's reference group as a whole is deprived (usually relative to other groups). Runciman also proposed that feelings of relative deprivation will not occur unless individuals think it is feasible that they (or their group) should have the desired object. Finally, Runciman pointed out that comparison with one's own outcomes in the past can produce feelings of relative deprivation - a possibility that removes the necessity for social comparisons.

Gurr (1970) proposed a theory of rebellion , wherein three types of deprivation were distinguished (aspirational, decremental, and progressive), based on different ways that people's expectations (perceived entitlements) can exceed their capabilities (actual outcomes). In each type, though, the essential process was postulated to be the same: People feel deprived when they perceive that they are unlikely to obtain the outcomes to which they feel entitled. Thus, in contrast to Runciman (1966), Gurr proposed that deprivation is more likely to occur when people believe that it is not feasible for them to obtain their desired outcomes.

Crosby (1976) proposed a more elaborate model of relative deprivation which had profound influence in subsequent research. On the basis of a review and integration of prior theories, Crosby proposed necessary and sufficient "preconditions" for feelings of egoistical relative deprivation. In order for individuals to feel resentful about not possessing some desired object (X), they must (a) see that someone else possesses X, (b) want X, (c) feel entitled to X, (d) think it is feasible to obtain X, and (e) lack a sense of personal responsibility for not having X. Crosby also speculated about some of the determinants of these preconditions, as well as the consequences of relative deprivation, although her proposed set of preconditions has engendered the most subsequent interest.

While the distinction between egoistic and fraternal relative deprivation has eluded or been ignored by many more recent theorists, a solid body of empirical research has highlighted its importance. Abrams (1990), Birt & Dion (1987), Gartell (1982), Guimond & Dube-Simard (1983), Tougas & Veileux (1988), Vanneman & Pettigrew (1972) and Walker & Mann (1987) have all demonstrated empirical links between fraternal relative deprivation and social or group responses. A common finding among these studies is that despite variance, fraternal relative deprivation is a better predictor of social outcomes than egoistic relative deprivation.

According to Petta & Walker (1992), identity lurks in the background of several studies on fraternal relative deprivation, but is only ever directly considered and measured by Abrams 1990) and Tougas & Veilleux (1988, 1990). Guimond & Dube-Simard (1983) and Walker & Mann (1987) allude to it when attempting to provide explanations for why fraternal relative deprivation has stronger links with social outcomes than does egoistic relative deprivation. The emergent idea in these two studies is that fraternal relative deprivation works (predicts things social) because the perception of group-based deprivation arouses a sense of group identity (Abrams, 1990). It seems likely that deprivation, especially fraternal, will lead to a heightened sense of social identity, which in turn will lead to greater affect attached to that perceived deprivation, and to other social outcomes too (prejudice against out-groups, social protest, militancy, etc.).

The social identity theory reformulation identifies two factors which further influence perceptions of relative deprivation: instability and illegitimacy (Tajfel, 1981). Instability refers to the perception that the intergroup status hierarchy is likely to change due to the lower status group agitating for better conditions. Illegitimacy refers to the perception that the intergroup situation, and its ramifications violate moral norms, such as fairness and justice.

Abeles (1973) further asserted that a complete or sufficient empirical test of relative deprivation is very seldom made, precisely because researchers do not measure feelings of justice and causal attributions. People's perception of the causes of their situation is important in determining their evaluation of their situation in a given society. The results of several studies conducted in America indicated that blacks who attributed their situation to external causes were more militant than those blaming themselves for their situation (Caplan & Paige, 1968; Forward & Williams, 1970; Gurin, Gurin, Lao & Beattie, 1969; Sears & McConahay, 1973).

Within the context of conflictual race relations that prevails in South Africa, individuals place a high premium on political freedom and good socioeconomic conditions (which in the past have been the exclusive domain of the white racial minority), and they may feel deprived of

these values based on a comparison of their own positions with those of other racial groups. If they experience a difference of their positions relative to those of the other groups and they believe that such a difference is unjust, it may lead to a sense of moral outrage at the perceived injustice (Abeles, 1976), a heightened sense of group identity (Abrams, 1990), negative attitudes towards the reference group (Van Dyk & Nieuwoudt,), and attempts to end the deprivation through social protest (Abeles, 1976; Walker & Mann, 1987).

The present study is part of a longitudinal investigation of the impact the process of socio-economic transformation has on intergroup attitudes in South Africa. The author therefore sought to investigate whether within a context of racial rivalry, perceptions of relative deprivation, illegitimacy, instability, and attributions of the perceived deprivation, do explain intergroup attitudes, moral outrage, in-group identification and political involvement. The results presented and discussed here represent the first phase of the study.

Method

Respondents

A total of 340 respondents participated as subjects in the present study. 54 of the respondents were recruited from a high school (First National College) in the then Department of Education and Training. The rest were psychology 1 (full-time) and 3 (part-time) students at Vista University, Daveyton. They were asked to answer a questionnaire on a number of social issues that are significant this time in South Africa. The respondents' age ranged from 15 to 69 years (M = 24).

Materials

The questionnaire contained measures of the four components of relative deprivation, an ethnic identity scale, an intergroup attitude scale, and a political involvement scale.

Independent Variables.

A variation of Cantril's Self-Anchoring Scale was used to measure relative deprivation (Cantril, 1965). In its present form the scale consisted of a set of steps from 1 to 10. Respondents were told that the top step (10) represents the best socio-economic situation for a racial group in South Africa and the bottom step (1) represented the worst situation. Respondents were asked to evaluate their own group (black Africans), Afrikaans-speaking whites, and English-speaking whites by indicating which steps best described the present, the past (5 years ago), and the future (5 years ahead) position of each group. They were also asked to indicate where each group should stand if they were to have what is rightfully and fairly their share of the wealth of the country.

An index of **Relative Deprivation** was obtained by subtracting the value the respondents assigned to their groups' present position from the value assigned to the present position of Afrikaans-speaking and, English-speaking whites.

Instability of Perceived Deprivation was measured by subtracting the scores indicating the expectations of the future position of Africans from the scores indicating the expectations of the future positions of Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking whites.

A response to the question: At which step on the socio-economic ladder would you say Black Africans (white Afrikaans-speaking and white English-speaking) people as a group should stand if they were to have what was rightfully and fairly their share of the wealth of this country? provided an index of **Illegitimacy of Perceived Deprivation.**

An indication of respondents' **Attributions of Perceived Deprivation** was obtained by asking the subjects to indicate the extent to which they perceived each of the three groups as responsible for the difference between black Africans and Afrikaans/English speaking whites as they had indicated it on the ladder. The range was from 1, indicating "not at all responsible" to 5 indicating "completely responsible".

Dependent variables

Two items focused on the measurement of **Moral Outrage**: How do you feel about the socio-economic difference between Black Africans and White Afrikaans/English speakers at present - as you have indicated it on the ladder? (a) Do you feel upset or not upset? (b) Do you feel angry or not angry? The range of possible responses was from 1, indicating "Not angry/upset" to 5, indicating "Exceptionally angry/upset". Responses to these two items were summed to create an index of **Moral Outrage.**

To measure **Political Involvement,** respondents were presented with a list of 7 questions for which they were requested to answer yes or no by ticking 1 (indicating yes) or 2 (indicating no). The questions were (1) Are you a member of a political organisation or party? (2) Do you attend political meetings or rallies? (3) Have you urged some of your friends or family to attend meetings or rallies? (4) Do you pay membership fees to, or donate money to cover expenses for the running of a political organisation or party? (5) Do you distribute pamphlets for a political organisation or party? (6) Do you serve as an office bearer in a political party or organisation? and (7) Are you interested in politics? An index of the extent of political involvement was obtained by subtracting the sum of all responses from 14. The higher the score, the more involved the respondent.

Intergroup Attitudes were measured by a 10-item Likert scale, where each item was responded to on a 7 point scale (-3 = strongly disagree to 3 = strongly agree). There were two separate scales, one measuring anti-Afrikaans attitudes, the other measuring anti-English attitudes. Examples of items in the scale are "White Afrikaans/English speaking South Africans are basically a good and decent people", and "I can understand why some people might want to kill white Afrikaans/English speaking South Africans".

The **Ethnic Identity** scale also consisted of ten items, each responded to on a 7-point Likert scale (-3 = strongly disagree to 3 = strongly agree). The scale had items such as "I am a person who feels strong ties with Black African people", and "I am a person who feels annoyed to say I'm a member of the Black African people".

RESULTS

Table 1 gives an indication of the subjects' mean scores on the independent variables (relative deprivation, instability of deprivation, illegitimacy of deprivation, and attributions of deprivation).

TABLE 1

Subjects' Mean Relative Deprivation, Instability, Illegitimacy, and Attributions Scores in Relation to Afrikaans and English speaking Whites.

	N		X		s	
	Afr	Eng	Afr	Eng	Afr	Eng
Relative Deprivation	335	334	3.0	3.6	3.64	2.97
Instability	330	329	4.3	3.4	4.09	3.68
Illegitimacy	325	333	5.3	4.7	4.73	4.00
Attributions	336	333	3.6	3.5	1.51	1.49

Table 1 indicates that the magnitude of perceived inequality between Black Africans and Afrikaans speaking whites is 3.0 (an equivalent of 3 rungs on the ladder), while the magnitude of perceived inequality between black Africans and English speaking whites is 3.6 (an equivalent of 3.6 rungs on the ladder). Thus, black Africans saw themselves as being more deprived relative to English speaking whites than they are relative to Afrikaans speakers. The socio-economic position of Afrikaans speakers was seen as more unstable (X = 4.3) and more illegitimate (X = 5.3) than that of English speakers (X = 3.4 for Instability and X = 4.7 for Illegitimacy). With regard to attributions, Afrikaans speakers were seen as slightly more to blame for the inequality that exists between them and black Africans (X = 3.6) than English speakers were for the inequality that exists between them and black Africans (X = 3.5).

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients, for the dependent variables. All the scales had satisfactory reliability estimates.

TABLE 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients of Intergroup Attitudes and Identification Scales

Scale	Mean	SD	Alpha	N	Items
Anti-Afrikaans Scale	11.3	10.87	0.68	316	10
Anti-English Scale	-4.0	12.06	0.78	315	10
Identification Scale	23.0	9.62	0.81	320	10

The results of correlations between independent and dependent variables are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Correlations Between Relative Deprivation, Illegitimacy, Instability, Attributions and Moral Outrage, Political Involvement, Anti-Afrikaans Attitudes, & Ethnic Identity.

	Moral Outrage	Anti-Afrikaans Attitudes	Ethnic Identity	Political Involvement
Relative Deprivation	r = .16 N = 327 p .003	r = .12 N = 311 p .037	r = .17 N = 315 p .002	r = -.01 N = 319 p .874
Illegitimacy	r = .22 N = 317 p .000	r = .29 N = 301 p .000	r = 19 N = 306 p. .001	r = -.01 N = 309 p .807
Instability	r = .16 N = 322 p .003	r = .11 N = 306 p .061	r = .08 N = 310 p .165	r = -07 N = 314 p .222
Attributions	r = .10 N = 330 p .068	r = .07 N = 314 p .201	r = .25 N = 319 p .000	r = .05 N = 322 p .406

Political involvement yielded no significant correlations with any of the relative deprivation measures, as a result it was then dropped from inclusion in any further analysis. This lack of significant correlations can be explained through the scale measuring involvement in formal activities rather than focusing on the more affective aspects of political involvement, as the scales measuring other dependent variables did. Significant correlations would therefore be expected if a scale that tapped the more affective dimensions of political involvement was used.

The main effect for relative deprivation was significant, indicating that the more subjects viewed their group (black Africans) as deprived relative to white Afrikaans speakers, the more they experienced feelings of moral outrage ($r = .16$), the stronger the anti- Afrikaans attitudes ($r = 12$), and the stronger the identification with the black African group ($r = .17$).

The main effect of illegitimacy was even more significant, indicating that perceptions of illegitimacy of the deprivation of black Africans is a stronger predictor of moral outrage ($r = .22$), anti-Afrikaans attitudes, ($r = .29$), and identification with black Africans ($r = .17$).

Subjects' scores on instability indicated that the more they perceived the position of black Africans as deprived relative to Afrikaans speakers, the more feelings of moral outrage they experienced ($r = .16$). Instability had no significant relationship with any other variable, except anti-Afrikaans attitudes where the relationship approached significance ($r = .11$). Attributions were strong predictors of identification with the black African group ($r = .25$) and moral outrage, although the latter association was weak and only approached significance ($r = .10$).

TABLE 4

Correlations between Relative Deprivation, Illegitimacy, Instability, Attributions and Moral Outrage, Anti-English Attitudes, Ethnic Identity, & Political Involvement.

	Moral Outrage	Anti-English Attitudes	Ethnic Identity	Political Involvement
Relative Deprivation	r = .23 N = 332 p .000	r = .08 N = 309 p .145	r = .16 N = 314 p .006	r = -.02 N = 318 p .788
Illegitimacy	r = .25 N = 331 p .000	r = .24 N = 308 p .000	r = .17 N = 313 p .002	r = .00 N = 317 p .944
Instability	r = .14 N = 327 p .009	r = .19 N = 304 p .001	r = .06 N = 309 p .310	r = .03 N = 313 p .580
Attributions	r = .22 N = 330 p .000	r = .01 N = 309 p .908	r = .05 N = 313 p .373	r = -.01 N = 317 p .876

Relative deprivation experienced by black Africans when comparing their group to white English speakers was significantly correlated with moral outrage (r = .23) and own group identification (r = .16) but not with anti-English attitudes (r = .08). This indicates that the more subjects saw their group as deprived relative to English speakers, the more they experienced feelings of moral outrage, and the stronger their identification with their group.

Again, illegitimacy of was a stronger predictor of feelings of moral outrage, anti- English attitudes, and own-group identification. The correlations were: moral outrage, r = .25; anti-English attitudes, r = .24; and ethnic identity, r = .17.

Instability was significantly correlated with moral outrage (r = .14) and anti-English attitudes (r = .19), meaning: the more unstable own group deprivation was perceived to be, the more feelings of moral outrage were experienced and the stronger the anti-English attitudes.

Attributions were significantly correlated with moral outrage (r = .22) only, indicating that the more the English speakers were seen as responsible for the socioeconomic situation of blacks Africans, the more subjects experienced feelings of moral outrage.

Discussion

The expected concomitant effect was that the more subjects perceived the socioeconomic situation of their own group (black Africans) as being deprived, illegitimate, unstable, and as resulting from the reference group's treatment of black Africans when compared to white Afrikaans/English speakers, the more they would experience feelings of moral outrage, the stronger the anti-Afrikaans/English attitudes held, and the stronger their identification with their own group. The results indicated a tendency in this direction, but illegitimacy proved by far the stronger predictor of feelings of moral outrage, anti-Afrikaans & anti-English attitudes, and identification with the black African group.

The sample experienced group relative deprivation of the magnitude of 3 rungs on the ladder (X = 3.0) in relation to Afrikaans speakers, and 3.6 rungs on the ladder (X = 3.6) in relation to English speakers. This finding is in agreement with that of Appelgryn & Nieuwodt (1988) and is understandable because the present socioeconomic situation is more favourable to whites than to black Africans.

All four predictor variables were significantly correlated with moral outrage indicating that the perceived inequality provoked feelings of anger and discontent.

Recent work in relative deprivation theory has stressed the importance of the distinctions between fraternalistic and egoistic forms, and has suggested that empirically relating relative deprivation to identity is important to the further development of theoretical links between relative deprivation and social identity theory (Petta & Walker, 1992). Relative deprivation and illegitimacy were significantly related to identification with the black African group, in both cases, i.e. when inequality was experienced in relation to both Afrikaans and English speakers. With respect to Afrikaans speakers, own group identification was further correlated

with attributions of responsibility for current inequality to Afrikaans speakers. In both cases, illegitimacy was by far the stronger predictor of in-group identification.

Tajfel's (1981) theory of social identity provides a plausible explanation for the relationship between relative deprivation and in-group identification. Social identity provides a psychological link between self and group, such that group classifications become internalized at the individual level as social identity. When comparisons are made with out-groups and these result in negative evaluations, then in-group identity will be more salient and stronger. Thus, the view by Africans that their socioeconomic status is low relative to that of whites could contribute to their own group identification. Subjects who perceived the situation as illegitimate would further be expected to give responses that display a rejection of inferiority and striving for positively valued distinctiveness.

Finally, the perception that Afrikaners were responsible for apartheid and therefore the low position occupied by black Africans on the socio-economic ladder, and not the English, who could be seen as incidentally benefiting from a political structure set up by Afrikaners, could explain why in-group identification is significantly related to attributions when the comparison group is Afrikaans speakers but not when its English speakers.

The data support the idea that the experience of relative deprivation could contribute to negative attitudes towards out-groups which are perceived to be illegitimately enjoying a privileged socio-economic status. Again, the significant relationship between relative deprivation with respect to anti-Afrikaans attitudes could have resulted from the fact that subjects felt Afrikaners were behind the oppressive political order responsible for the position of Africans. English speakers, on the other hand, could be seen as benefitting from the political order (and even doing better than Afrikaners), but not responsible for it, hence anti-English attitudes are not significantly related to relative deprivation.

The effect of relative deprivation on anti-Afrikaans/English attitudes was even more marked when the subjects experienced the situation as illegitimate. One could imagine that feelings of illegitimacy give rise to anger, which could lead to the deterioration of intergroup relations if other groups are seen to be benefitting at the cost of one's own in-group's position.

In conclusion, the present study shows the importance of operationalising relative deprivation within the framework of social identity theory. It suggests that the experience of relative deprivation, illegitimacy and instability of deprivation, and the attribution of deprivation to reference groups is critical in understanding black African in-group identification and anti-white attitudes in South Africa. The second phase of the study will provide enlightenment on the impact the current process of socio-economic transformation has on the relationship between different aspects of relative deprivation, intergroup attitudes, and in-group identification.

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